# The Great Development of Singapore

## By JUDSON D. STUART

ONE hundred years ago the tip of the Malay Peninsula, that points down like a giant finger into the heart of the greatest archipelago in the world, was a pestilent jungle, the home of tigers and of giant snakes, the rendezvous of Malay pirates—in a word, the most uninviting spot on earth for civilized man.

Today the tip of this peninsula is the site of one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world, Singapore, with a population in the city proper of about 350,000 and with nearly a million and a quarter people in the surrounding colony. It was in 1819 that Sir Stamford Raffles purchased the land from the Sultan of Johore, and three months later he wrote to Lord Warren Hastings, Governor:

"We have a growing colony of 5,000 souls."

Today this colony with its 1,250,000 inhabitants, including its city of Singapore, is the port of call for all ships passing to and from the Far East. At the outbreak of the war its annual imports amounted to $280,630,000 and its exports to $220,835,860. These have increased, but exact figures are not procurable for this, the centenary year.

In no other city in the world live such a variety of nationalities; it embraces representatives of every race of the Old World and most races of the western hemisphere. To the uninitiated, Singapore is a mad medley of strange sights, weird sounds, unbelievable customs—and yet it is a clean city, with well paved streets, good business blocks, splendid docks and a most attractive residential district.

If one were to be suddenly transplanted to Raffles Square in Singapore, he would doubtless be unable to guess, in a dozen attempts, his location. "China, perhaps," he would say, only at next glance to shake his head and decide that it was "India." Again he would see something that would indicate that he was in some African coast city, or Turkey, or Persia or Jerusalem or Arabia. In a way he would be right, at least as to local color, for there are bits of all these, and many other countries, in Singapore.

A veteran traveler would doubtless guess correctly, even if he did not recollect the city, were he to espy a certain fruit for sale in the odd market booths. This fruit is the mangosteen. It grows in no other spot on earth save the Malay Peninsula. It is said to have been the only known edible fruit that Queen Victoria had not eaten. Her Highness was extremely fond of fruit. Her subjects vied with one another to bring her rare fruits, and hundreds have sought to get her the delicious mangosteen, but this could never be accomplished. One can never know the taste of this—declared to be the finest fruit in all the world—unless one is on the spot, for it will not keep. Trees cannot be transplanted. It will not ripen from green fruit if plucked, it will not keep long enough for an ocean voyage. The mangosteen is about the size of a crab apple, and has a thin shell something like the rough shell of a walnut. The fruit, when ripe, is cut through with a knife. The inside is of the consistency of a grape and is eaten out of the four divisions with a spoon.

RAFFLES SQUARE, named in honor of the founder of Singapore, is surrounded by brick, white-faced, high-jointed godowns (warehouses). Through the glassless windows the punkahs—the fans of the tropics—swing back and forth with ceaseless regularity, the motive power being furnished by tall punkah-wallas, whose ebony skins glisten in the torrid sunshine as they tug at the cord which moves the punkahs. Without these, life would be intolerable for white people. In the summer months civilization is relieving many punkah-wallas here, as elsewhere in this part of the country, by means of electric fans.

Under the portico-like verandas, whose narrow breadth take the place of sidewalks, are little booths that jut in like a bow window from the inside. In these booths sit the merchants, Turks, Arabs, Japanese, Chinese, Indians, Malays, Singhalese, Jews, Armenians and an almost endless variety of mankind. In the street pass Chinese with two barrels on wheels. They are shouting "Machen!" or "eating," and while you wait these Chinese "cookees," with queues coiled neatly on their shaven heads, will concoct a meal for you over the charcoal fire, using bits of fish, edible birdnest, a seaweed, shark fins and other "delicacies." The Malay *syce* or driver, passes along the street with his Deli pony, no larger than a Newfoundland dog. Indians will drive giant two-wheeled bullock carts, made exactly as they were a thousand or two thousand years ago. The lazy water buffalo, with his almost hairless hide glistening in the sun, waddles slowly down the street hauling his load; gharries (like old-fashioned coupés) rattle past. These are like latticed boxes between two wheels. In the midst of the din and clatter and chatter pass a party of solemn Jews in robes of spotless white and purple; a Singhalese jeweler seeks to sell rubies and other gems to the Eurasian clerks, an Indian chitty or money lender calmly talks with a brother, seemingly unaware of the hot sun. These chitties, slim, six-foot men wearing only a turban, a few yards of gauze about their waists, and red sandals, would not strike one as handling more money than any other class of people in the East. They borrow from English banks without security save that of their caste name and lend to the Eurasian clerks at 12 per cent a month. If a chitty fails, his caste makes up the loss to the banks and drives him out of the caste, a pariah.

Dyaks from Borneo saunter along, Parsee merchants in their tall conical hats mingle with the crowds; there are Chinese rickshaw runners, cart coolies, Tamil road menders, Bugis, Achinese, Siamese, Burmese, Javanese, Madras serving men, Negro firemen, Lascar sailors and many others. The races have not been thoroughly classified. It would seem almost impossible. But the last classification, about half a dozen years ago, showed, in rough numbers, 4,000 Europeans, 5,000 Eurasians, 175,000 Chinese, 50,000 Malays, 20,000 Indians and several thousand of other races.

The island is separated from the mainland by the Straits of Malacca, once the haunts of the Malay pirates. On the mainland is the Sultanate of Johore. No shore is more beautiful than the approach to Singapore, an emerald cluster of islands, a turquois sea, a lace-like horizon of palm fronds. The Malay villages come down to the shore. At low tide their huts are on high piles and mud is all about them. At high tide their "streets" are, like Venice, great waterways, crowded with sampans and fishing praus. The houses of the campong, or village, are umbrella-like, made of attap. Nude little children play about the drying nets by the shore of lagoons, darting back when the ugly snouts of crocodiles are thrust out of the water, and their cruel black, beady eyes stare at them. The island of Singapore with its dome-like hills shows to advantage, deep shadows between the hills, and a closer approach shows the foliage of the banyan trees, green and yellow bamboo, sentinel palms and the fan-shaped outlines of the traveler's palm. At the rapid rise of the great red tropical sun there are silhouettes of the minarets of a Mohammedan mosque, the carved dome of a temple of Buddah, the slender spire of an English cathedral, the bold corners of Government House and the broad facades of municipal buildings. Then is seen the maze of shipping-craft that have sailed the Seven Seas, modern steel ships from New York and London, quaint junks from Chinese ports, Malay and Kling sampans and the cumbersome giant tondkangs of Borneo. Masts of sailing ships, stacks of new oil burners, the latticed fighting tops of battleships, with a throng of tiny craft of all sorts moving in and about like ants amid tree stumps.

Every great Oriental port has its "Bund"—or water front—the street of big export houses. The "Bund" at Singapore faces the Singapore River.

THE water front with its excellent harbor 36 feet deep extends for six miles. The city of Singapore drops back for six miles and over the rest of the island are innumerable villages close to plantations of peppers and tapioca.

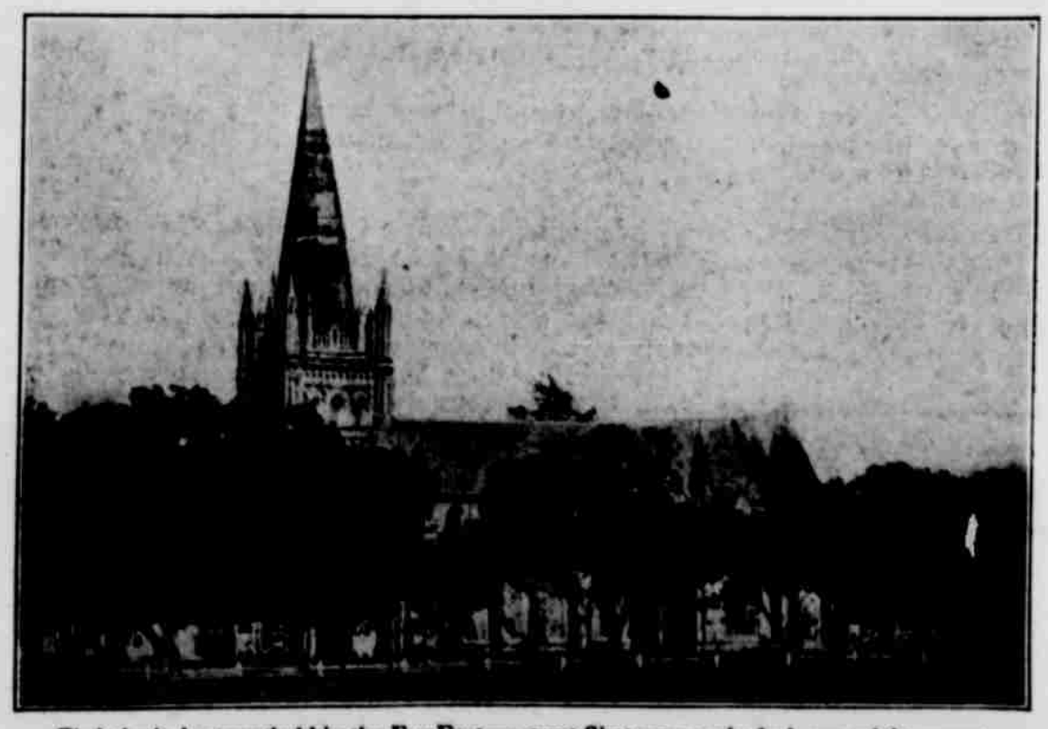
Back from the banyan-shaded Raffles Square is "Tanglin," the suburbs where government officials dwell in luxurious bungalows. From Cananaugh Bridge at one of the islands there extends the ocean Esplanade, the pride of the city, which incloses a public playground of fifteen acres, reclaimed from the sea. Every day, after the heat has fallen from 150 degrees to 80 degrees, the European population meets on this Esplanade park to play tennis, cricket and of late years, baseball. They gather also to listen to the band, to gossip, to promenade, to keep in touch with their own people as much as possible during these recreation hours.

Acres of pineapples stretch away, and acres of bananas, coffee fields, sago swamps, spice orchards, are on every hand. All this was, one should bear in mind, a dense, dangerous, fever-laden jungle a hundred years ago this year. And the thing that has developed it and brought a million and a quarter people here where once were only beasts, reptiles and bogs, is good roads!

Singapore, from a commercial and strategic standpoint, is unassailable. When the English and the Dutch divided the East Indies by drawing a line through the Straits of Malacca—the English to hold all north, the Dutch all south—the crafty Dutchman smiled benignly and went back to his coffee and tobacco trading in the beautiful islands of Java and Sumatra, pitying the ignorance of the Englishman, who was contented with the swampy jungles of an unknown and savage neck of land, little thinking that inside half a century all his products would come to this same despised district for a market, while his own colonies would retrograde and gradually pass into the hands of the English.

Chief among the imports of Singapore are tin, for on an island close at hand is the largest tin smelting plant in the world, supplying 90 per cent of the world's tin. Other imports include gambier, sago, tapioca, pepper, tortoise shell, mother-of-pearl, gutta-percha, rubber, nutmeg, mace, camphor gum, coffee, rattans, tobacco, rice, hides, rare woods, etc. Its manufactures include artificial ice, biscuit, mineral and aerated waters, canneries, waterworks, saw mills and a few textile mills. Great Britain gets 90 per cent of her spices from this place and it is the chief place of import of gutta-percha. It is an open port, with excellent shipbuilding yards and is the great coaling station of the East. It has acquired the monopoly of trade between India and the Far East and the class of Indians, Chinese, Malays and other people who settle there is of the best, since they appreciate their opportunity to live there in peace, with assured security of life and property. To protect these they keep out the bad element, and better protection is afforded the stranger in Singapore than in almost any other city in the Orient.

Singapore, a hundred years old this year, is a far greater city, a far livelier city, than scores that were founded a thousand years ago. It is one of the greatest cities of the world and the center of all East Indian commerce, the key to southern Asia and one of the massive links in the great chain of British domains encircling the world.



Christianity's stronghold in the Far East—a great Singapore cathedral, one might expect to see in Europe or America instead of in an outpost of Ancient China.